Appendix table 7-23.
Public assessment of genetic engineering: 1985–2001

Characteristic	1985	1990	1995	1997	1999	2001
			Percent			
All adults						
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	23	20	21	19	20	19
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	26	27	22	23	24	21
Benefits equal harmful results	12	16	22	22	18	28
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	14	19	23	20	22	19
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	25	18	12	16	16	14
Male						
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	26	21	24	23	24	23
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	28	31	22	26	26	22
Benefits equal harmful results	11	14	21	20	17	27
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	13	18	22	17	21	16
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	22	16	10	14	12	12
Female						
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	19	19	18	16	16	14
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	25	23	22	21	22	20
Benefits equal harmful results	14	17	22	23	20	28
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	15	21	23	22	22	22
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	27	20	15	18	20	15
Less than high school graduate						
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	19	16	10	15	18	15
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	29	27	19	18	19	24
Benefits equal harmful results	16	25	30	23	27	27
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	12	17	29	30	21	20
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	24	15	13	14	15	13
High school graduate						
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	21	19	20	18	18	18
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	24	27	21	24	24	19
Benefits equal harmful results	13	12	21	21	16	28
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	15	21	23	18	24	21
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	27	21	14	19	18	15
Baccalaureate and higher						
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	33	29	35	27	27	24
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	29	28	30	28	28	24
Benefits equal harmful results	7	15	16	21	16	27
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	13	15	14	14	17	15
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	18	13	6	10	12	10
Attentive public to science and technology[a]						
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	37	32	42	36	33	29
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	28	30	22	24	31	20
Benefits equal harmful results	9	9	16	13	8	20
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	12	12	13	16	19	20
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	14	17	7	11	9	10
Attentive public to medical research[a]						
Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results	29	31	34	27	28	25
Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results	24	27	21	25	24	19
Benefits equal harmful results	12	12	17	18	12	27
Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits	11	17	18	18	23	20
Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits	24	13	9	12	13	9
			Sample size (number)			
All adults	2,005	2,033	2,006	2,000	1,882	1,574
Male	950	964	953	930	900	751
Female	1,054	1,070	1,053	1,070	982	823
Less than high school graduate	507	495	418	420	403	116
High school graduate	1,143	1,179	1,196	1,188	1,111	834
Baccalaureate and higher	349	359	392	392	368	614
Attentive public to science and technology[a]	235	229	195	288	216	195
Attentive public to medical research[a]	349	337	310	377	301	240

See explanatory notes, is any, and SOURCE at end of table

Appendix table 7-23.
Public assessment of genetic engineering: 1985–2001

[a]To be classified as attentive to a given policy area, an individual must indicate that he or she is "very interested" in that issue, is "very well informed" about it, and a regular reader of a daily newspaper or relevant national magazine. Individuals who report that they are "very interested" in an issue area but do not think that they are "very well informed" about it are classified as the "interested public." All other individuals are classified as members of the "residual public" for that issue. The attentive public for science and technology combines the attentive public for new scientific discoveries and the attentive public for new inventions and technologies. Any individual who is not attentive to either of those issues but who is a member of the interested public for at least one of those issues is classified as a member of the interested public for science and technology. All other individuals are classified as members of the residual public for science and technology

NOTES: Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding. A few respondents did not provide information about their highest level of education. In 1985, the question was worded: Some persons have argued that the creation of new life forms through genetic engineering constitutes a serious risk, while other persons have argued that this research may yield major benefits for society. In your opinion, are the risks of genetic engineering greater than the benefits, or are the benefits of genetic engineering research greater than the risks? Would you say that the benefits are substantially greater than the risks, or only slightly greater than the risks? Would you say that the risks are substantially greater than the benefits or only slightly greater than the benefits?

–In 1990, the question was worded: Some persons have argued that the creation of new life forms through genetic engineering research constitutes a serious risk, while other persons have argued that this research may yield major benefits for society. In your opinion, are the risks of genetic engineering research greater than its benefits, or are the benefits of genetic engineering research greater than its risks? Would you say that the benefits have substantially exceeded the risks or only slightly exceeded the risks? Would you say that the risks have substantially exceeded the benefits or only slightly exceeded the benefits?

–In 1995, the question was worded: Some persons have argued that the creation of new life forms through genetic engineering research constitutes a serious risk, while other persons have argued that this research may yield major benefits for society. In your opinion, have the benefits of genetic engineering research outweighed the harmful results, or have the harmful results of genetic engineering research been greater than its benefits? Would you say that the balance has been strongly in favor of beneficial results or only slightly? Would you say that the balance has been strongly in favor of harmful results or only slightly?

–In 1997 and 1999, half of the respondents were asked the question used in 1995. The other half were asked: Some persons have argued that the modification of existing life forms through genetic engineering research constitutes a serious risk, while other persons have argued that this research may yield major benefits for society. In your opinion, have the benefits of engineering research outweighed the harmful results, or have the harmful results of genetic engineering research been greater than its benefits? Would you say that the balance has been strongly in favor of beneficial results or only slightly? Would you say that the balance has been strongly in favor of harmful results or only slightly? In 2001, all respondents were asked this question.

SOURCE: National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Statistics (NSF/SRS), NSF Survey of Public Attitudes Toward and Understanding of Science and Technology, various years.

See figure 7-8 in Volume 1.